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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4774
INFO DIA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 3880

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, MPOL, PFOR, PE
SUBJECT: USG-GOP EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON ARMS AND REGIONAL TENSIONS

SUMMARY. THE RECENT HIGHLY-PUBLICIZED VISIT OF CINCSO GENERAL DENNIS MCAULIFFE TO PERU PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ANOTHER INFORMAL DISCUSSION WITH GOP ABOUT PERU'S ARMS BUILD-UP AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL TENSIONS. CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY GENERAL MCAULIFFE AND THE AMBASSADOR TO SENIOR PERUVIAN MILITARY OFFICIALS FOLLOWED PRIOR LOW-KEY USG APPROACHES TO PERU AND WERE ALONG LINES OF APPROACHES BEING UNDERTAKEN IN WASHINGTON. PERUVIAN OFFICIALS EXPRESSED HOPE THAT PRESIDENTIAL AND OTHER HIGH-LEVEL VISITS BETWEEN PERU AND ITS NEIGHBORS AND A POSSIBLE JOINT PERU-CHILE COMMEMORATION OF THE 1879 WAR OF THE PACIFIC WOULD PREVENT A RISE IN TENSIONS AND DEMONSTRATE PERU'S PEACEFUL INTENT.
THE GOP TERMED THE MCAULIFFE VISIT ONE OF MILITARY COORDINATION REGARDING TRAINING AND EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, NOT ARMS. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE VISIT OF CINCSO GENERAL MCAULIFFE AFFORDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR WIDE RANGING EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH TOP GOP MILITARY OFFICIALS. GENERAL MCAULIFFE AND AMBASSADOR HELD LENGTHY CONVERSATION WITH MILITARY JOINT COMMAND CHIEF, GENERAL OSCAR MOLINA PALLOCHEA. IN RESPONSE TO AN EXPRESSION OF CONCERN ON THE ARMS BUILD-UP, MOLINA GAVE THE STANDARD "FIVE FRONTIERS AND FIVE POTENTIAL ENEMIES" DEFENSE FOR PERU'S ARMS PURCHASES.

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HE DELARED THAT PERU NOW SPEAKS FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH
AND WILL NEVER AGAIN BE CAUGHT OFF-GUARD (REFERRING TO THE
DISASTROUS 1879 WAR OF THE PACIFIC). MOLINA THEN STATED THAT
PERU IS COMMITTED TO INSURING PEACE IN THE REGION. THEREFORE,
THE GOP IS IN CONSTANT COMMUNICATION WITH ITS NEIGHBORS IN ORDER
TO OFFER ASSURANCES AND SAFEGUARDS. AS AN EXAMPLE OF PERU'S
EFFORT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS, MOLINA TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT
A MORALES BERMUDEZ MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT PINCHET HAD BEEN SENT
THROUGH CHILEAN GENERAL EWING (IN LIMA THE FIRST DAYS OF MAY)
AND THAT MORALES BERMUDEZ PROPOSES TO VISIT CHILE LATER THIS
YEAR UPON HIS RETURN FROM ARGENTINA. MOLINA ALSO STATED THAT
PERU WILL TRY TO ARRANGE FOR JOINT CHILE-PERU COMMEMORATION
OF THE 1879 WAR OF THE PACIFIC OR, IF THIS PROVES IMPOSSIBLE,
AT LEAST BILATERAL COORDINATION IN ORDER TO AVOID EXCESSES AND
TO PREVENT EXACERBATION OF TENSIONS.

2. GENERAL MCAULIFFE AND THE AMBASSADOR ALSO EXPRESSED U.S.
CONCERN WITH LARGE-SCALE ARMS PURCHASES DURING THEIR DISCUSSIONS
WITH ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL PEDRO RICHTER AND WITH AIR
MINISTER GENERAL DANTE POGGI. GENERAL POGGI ALSO REFERRED TO
PERU'S "ENCIRCLEMENT" BY FIVE NATIONS, CLAIMING THAT GOP
PURCHASES WERE NOT "SELF-GENERATED" BUT WERE DICTATED BY OUT-
SIDE CONSIDERATIONS. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THE APPARENT CONTRA-
DICTION BETWEEN CHANNELING SCARCE RESOURCES INTO LARGE-SCALE
ARMS PURCHASES AT A TIME WHEN PERU'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ARE SO ACUTE. AND THE AMBASSADOR NOTED
THAT PERU'S DEBT BURDEN, INCREASED BY ARMS PURCHASES, LOOMS
LARGE AS BANKS CONSIDER ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

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3. GENERAL POGGI DID NOT DIRECTLY RESPOND TO THE AMBASSADOR,
BUT MADE A PERSONAL OBSERVATION THAT PERU MUST MAINTAIN ITS
CORDIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. AND THAT THE U.S. CONTINUES
TO HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN HELPING TO MAINTAIN
AN ARMS BALANCE IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. OTHER INTERLOCUTORS
DURING THE MCAULIFFE VISIT SHARED THE VIEW THAT THE HISTORICAL
U.S.-PERUVIAN MILITARY RELATIONSHIP MUST BE CONTINUED AND
THAT THE MCAULIFFE VISIT CONTRIBUTED TO THIS.

4. THE GOP GAVE THE CINCSO VISIT HIGH MEDIA EXPOSURE PERHAPS
TO SHOW NEIGHBORS AND OTHERS THAT MILITARY TIES WITH THE U.S.
ARE CLOSE AND NOT ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY PERU'S SOVIET PURCHASES.
UPON MCAULIFFE'S DEPARTURE MAY 7 GENERAL MOLINA DECLARED TO
THE PRESS THAT THE PERUVIAN ARMED FORCES MAINTAIN PERMANENT
LINKS WITH THE U.S. MILITARY IN THE SEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT
AND PEACE. MOLINA SAID THAT THE MCAULIFFE CONVERSATIONS DEALT
WITH "PENDING AFFAIRS", ADDING THAT COORDINATION OF MILITARY
AID DID NOT REFER TO ARMAMENT BUT TO THE INTERCHANGE OF MILITARY
OFFICERS AND THE ASSIGNMENT OF PERUVIAN OFFICERS TO THE U.S.

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FOR TRAINING.

5. COMMENT. TOP PERUVIAN MILITARY OFFICIALS SEEMED PREPARED FOR U.S. EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN AND ATTEMPTED TO ALLOY THEM BY DEMONSTRATING A GOP COMMITMENT TO EASE TENSIONS. THE GOP HOPES THAT PRESIDENTIAL VISITS, AND EFFORT TO PLAY DOWN 1979 WAR CENTENNIAL ACTIVITIES, AND CONSTANT INTERCHANGE BETWEEN CHILEAN AND PERUVIAN MILITARY COMMANDERS WILL HELP OFFSET FEARS RAISED BY PERU'S ARMS PURCHASES. THE GOP IS ALSO SEIZED WITH (AND SOMEWHAT DIVIDED BY) PROBLEMS WHICH ARMS PURCHASES CREATE FOR OBTAINING BALANCE OF PAYMENTS FINANCING.
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